

*Claire Golden*

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# CHILD WELFARE

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# CHILD WELFARE

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# SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DIRECT WORK WITH CHILDREN

Jane Ann Epperson

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*"Social workers making the transition from theory to practice in any area of specialization frequently feel confused and frustrated," Miss Epperson writes. "The knowledge is available and the case situation is at hand. It is the comfortable application of the one to the other which presents a problem. Particularly is this true in child welfare, where common casework skills must be supplemented by those peculiar to work with children. It is for those workers who seek an integration of knowledge and skills that this paper is offered."*

**DIRECT** work with children demands of the social worker in any agency setting an orientation into the world in which children live and a knowledge of the techniques employed in work with both children and adults. It is only as the worker achieves this orientation that she is able to test her knowledge and to develop her skills. Only through this medium can she gain an understanding of the way a child feels, the impact which certain events have had upon him, and an appreciation of the problems which may appear insignificant to an adult but which are of tremendous importance to him. This understanding must first take into account the child as he is and where he is, for it is only as he emerges as a distinct individual that the application of theory takes on meaning. All that has happened to a child or is happening to him, everything he has experienced, must be viewed in terms of its significance to him, not in terms of its meaning to adults or even to other children in the same family.

His environment, both physical and emotional, is an individual and highly personal thing. The house in which he lives is important as it offers him shelter and protection, as it affords some privacy, as it provides the opportunity for early experiences in respecting the property of others and in his assumption of responsibility. It is also important as it becomes the symbol of something of which he is proud or ashamed. It can even represent to him the success or failure of his parents and their resultant standing in the community. Closely related to the child's feeling regarding the physical aspects of the home is his attitude toward the family's economic status. The deprivation or the luxury he knows may become a powerful force in shaping the concept he holds of himself. Money does not necessarily mean love to a child, but its power is a force of varied and manifest significance to him.

The community in which a child lives may be regarded by adults in terms of its accessibility to schools, churches and clinics, the availability of recreational facilities, or the opportunities which it offers for special training. To each child this community is something different, and that which stimulates one child to growth may fix another in immobility. To the husky lad, sure of himself and of his world, a mile's walk to school may be a thrilling adventure; to his frail or timid brother it may represent a frightening ordeal. Attendance at church services may be an occasion of real pleasure to the child who has been well integrated into total community life, while it may represent confirmation of shame and inadequacy to the child who is poorly dressed and not accepted by his peers. To one child farm life may seem rich and good while to another it means isolation and loneliness. For each child the physical environment has a different meaning and on each a different impact. Workers need to be ever mindful of this, lest their evaluations of it become invested with their own feelings or colored by their own standards.

## Many Factors Affect Child's Reception

Even more difficult to evaluate are the intangible forces of the emotional environment into which a child is born and which become a part of his day-by-day relationships with his parents and with the other members of his family. Many factors affect the reception a child is accorded when he enters the family group: his being wanted or unwanted, his having come at a time of great stress or during a period of relative ease, his being legitimate or illegitimate, his being strong or weak, even his resemblance to a loved or to an unloved relative. The age of the parents at the time of his birth can be a matter of great significance; it may mean the difference in his being wel-



come or unwelcome, or in companionship or the lack of companionship. It may also be a factor in the degree of anxiety which is attached to the child's problems of growth and development. The sex of a child can color his reception from the moment of birth; a little boy may be "just another boy" in a large family of boys, or he may be a "son" with all the importance accorded the long-awaited or the first born. If there is friction between the parents, the sex of the child takes on additional significance, since there is a strong likelihood that an identification, to his detriment, will be made between him and one parent or some other member of the family. A child whose birth has resulted in the subsequent illness of the mother may be held responsible for this, either consciously or unconsciously, and the attitude of both parents toward him may be colored by this.

### Positions of Oldest and Youngest Differ

The child's position in the family is of singular significance since it affects not only his relationship to his parents, but to his brothers and sisters as well. The place of the first child is a unique one.<sup>1</sup> There has been no other before him and none which comes after will ever hold his peculiar distinction. He may have been long awaited, much desired, or his coming may have meant a too early assumption of parental responsibility with a reluctance to relinquish the care-free days of childlessness. Whichever role may be his to play, he becomes the child on whom the parents gain their first experience. Later he is the oldest sibling of the other children with demands placed on him for standard setting. Often he is called upon to sacrifice his own wishes in order to help in the care of his brothers and sisters. He must also witness the attention given the younger children, unable to remember when he, too, received such loving care. The first child always has to face the experience of surrendering his prerogatives to another child.

Perhaps as singular as the position of the oldest child is that of the youngest child, who may represent the last vestige of hope for the parents' own immortality or who may be regarded by them as an economic burden, another mouth to feed. Whatever attitude the parents take toward him, this child is apt to be protected and sheltered because he is the youngest, the baby. At the same time, stages in his growing up are more casually and calmly accepted because they have all been experienced before. This child reflects the attitudes of his older brothers and

sisters. He approaches school, church or camp with preconceived ideas and is prepared to like or dislike certain of the experiences which he will face. The youngest child is also often forced to submit to inconsistent and bewildering direction from both parents and siblings. It is sometimes his lot to receive "hand-me-downs" in both clothing and toys. If family ties are strong, acquiring the possessions of older siblings may represent taking on a part of their enviable status, but if ties are weak, it can be a humiliating experience. Just as the oldest child cannot remember his days of great physical dependence, so the youngest child is unable to imagine his time of independence and regards the freedom of his older brothers and sisters as a privilege which is not granted to him.

The middle children in a family have a place of their own, too. It is predicated on the frequency with which they succeed each other, whether they are wanted or not and the degree of pleasure or inconvenience their coming occasions. These are often children who are lost between the oldest and the youngest, for they never had the distinction of the former and they were compelled to relinquish the privileges of the latter.

The only child's position is akin to that originally held by the oldest, but is never tempered by his subsequent experiences with siblings. Too often he lives in an adult world which does not make realistic demands on him and which offers him little in preparation for the give-and-take expected of him by his peer group. Whether this child was wanted or not, his parents' attitude toward him is charged with feeling, for he is their only hope for the fulfillment of their dreams as well as a potential target for their pent-up hostilities.

Because the material related to the physical environment is obvious and the emotional environment is regarded as complex and profound, workers often lose sight of the value of facts which are readily available. A knowledge of a child's way of life, of the anticipation with which his coming was awaited, of the reception he was given, and the place accorded him in the family group speaks simply and eloquently to the worker who has learned to listen to the language of children and to appreciate the meaning of all their experiences to them. It is in this understanding that effective work with children has its roots.

### Worker's Role with Children Different

Workers who are inexperienced in the field of child welfare as a rule feel comfortable in working with parents and other adults while they are still groping and uncertain in their relationships with children. It is sometimes hard to recognize the similarities and

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Marion Stranahan mentions the significance of the places of oldest and youngest children in her article, "Varied Applications of Psychiatric Service in Child Caring Agencies", *Case Work for Children*, N. Y., Child Welfare League of America, Inc., 1937 (Mimeographed pamphlet).

at the same time to accept the differences in the two relationships, based as they are on a common philosophy. It is actually the altered role of the worker, her use of herself in communicating with children through language, plan, silences and shared experience, which distinguishes work with children from that with adults. Techniques and skills have to be re-defined and the new worker may wonder at times if her job is suddenly divested of its hard-won professionalism. The effective, purposeful relationship with children is nevertheless a professional one at its best, but because it differs from contacts with adults it needs to be examined separately.

The adult who comes to an agency may not be able to enunciate his basic problem, but he comes with some specific request for help. It may be wholly impersonal, it may suggest an area of personal difficulty, but it is seldom a disarming revelation of one's self. In contrast, the child seldom chooses to come to an agency, he is brought, and always for highly personal reasons which strike at the very core of his self-respect. The child may not know the real reason for his coming and needs help from the worker in accepting and understanding it. The nature of the problem may make it far easier for him to reject the worker than to accept her. For example, he may find it less difficult to accept placement if he can believe that she is taking him away from his parents rather than that they are voluntarily seeking his removal from the home. His attitude will also be colored by his previous experience with adults, particularly those of the worker's sex. His concepts of both men and women are based on what he has learned to expect of them. There is little reason for him to believe at the outset that this individual will be different from those he has known before. If the child still clings to a tenuous relationship with his parents, he may be afraid to like the worker for fear of losing the love he so tentatively possesses.

### Child's Information Given Spontaneously

Still another characteristic of the worker's relationship with children is its informality. Adults are usually seen in a carefully planned interview situation, but one does not "interview" children. As a rule the worker does not actively seek factual information from the child himself. However, there may be times when this is necessary. Instead, she takes the material which he gives spontaneously, both in conversation and behavior, and from it learns how he feels about himself, his family and the things which have happened to him.

With little children in particular the observation of behavior takes on a singular significance.

Roger was a four-year-old boy in nursery school when his little sister was born. He had been a leader in the group, independent in his actions and able to take much responsibility for himself. It was somewhat surprising then when a few weeks after her birth, Roger announced to his teacher that he was a kitten. He insisted on lapping the food from his plate or on being fed. He persistently demanded to sit on the teacher's lap and when she would ask him to move he replied, "But you have to hold a kitten." It was at this point that the school social worker was called in. From the mother she learned that Roger had been the adored son and only grandson for four years. It was clear that he was neither willing nor able to relinquish his place of unquestioned importance when the new baby arrived. With the worker's help, the mother saw that his behavior was not "silly play", but was his way of voicing his objections to his new role and of expressing his great need for reassurance of his parents' continuing love for him. Fortunately the mother and father had much to give both children and as Roger came to feel that his place in the family was not seriously threatened, his behavior resumed its normal pattern.

Perhaps a final difference in the relationships lies in the degree of personal investment. The adult ordinarily asks the worker to do something for him, to approve financial assistance, to make arrangements for convalescent care or to help with a personal problem. On the other hand, the child expects the worker to do something to him, to remove him from his home, to scold or punish for poor school work or to criticize for failure. His total self is involved, for he is at the mercy of adults. He has reason to be anxious and afraid, for his fears are big and all-inclusive and are made up of all his past failures and future uncertainties.

Pete, a bright nine-year-old, was referred to the school social worker because of emotional problems associated with his inability to read. His parents, both professional people, had little patience with him and insisted that he could read if he would try. Pete's situation became untenable when his younger brother began to read and to tease Pete mercilessly because of his "dumbness". Pete came to the worker's office with eyes downcast, dragging his feet and mumbling. He stood in the doorway for a few seconds looking at the worker uncertainly, then came in. He was tense and wary and participated in the conversation only in monosyllables. Finally the worker asked what he liked to do. Misunderstanding her question, he answered with much feeling, "I'd like to learn to read." She smiled and said she couldn't help him with that for she was not a teacher. At once Pete relaxed noticeably. His anxiety as to her intentions had been allayed and from that point on he felt safe in trusting her.

An understanding and appreciation of the qualities which characterize the child-worker relationship constitute the cornerstone for effective work with children. Out of such understanding grows the skill which enables the worker to feel comfortable in her contacts with children. The child senses her sureness and feels at ease. On this she builds with her knowledge of the child's world and his past experiences which she evaluates in terms of the dynamics of behavior. It is then that the child in all his individuality emerges, that his patterns become clear and his problems well defined.

## No Set Rules for Working with Children

Many workers who are able to view a child's situation diagnostically and objectively from afar feel frustrated and confused when they are face to face with the child himself. His frankness is disarming, his laughter beggars explanation, and his grief is hard to bear. Conversation with him is fragmentary and he disrupts the well-ordered scheme of things. Sometimes he makes it even more difficult by refusing to talk altogether or by controlling the situation entirely by his own methods.

There can be no rule for working with children, no set pattern, but there are certain things which the worker can do to make her task and theirs easier. There is comfort to be found in the fact that one is expected, that one is known, when one goes to a strange place. The worker should know the child's name, with its correct pronunciation, and what he likes to be called, or dislikes to be called. If this information cannot be obtained before the child comes in, it should be clarified at the time of introduction. A name is a personal thing and even though it may not actually please its owner, he is gratified when it is used for his early identification. Sometimes the worker in her attempts to make a child feel at ease, says that the teacher or his mother or the nurse has told her all about him. To the anxious or insecure child, the positive implication is lost, and he is frightened by the possibility of the worker's knowledge of all his badness. If there is need to mention the person who made the referral, this can be done in a less threatening way by alluding to something specific, rather than by use of vague generalities.

The child may have many questions, asked and unasked, as to who the worker is and what she does. Her explanation of her function should be given in language which he can understand and can be related to his own problem or situation.

Bob at ten had few friends and no accomplishments. There was friction in the family and he was often lost in the midst of grown-up quarrels. The one person to whom he had felt close and who had always had time for him was his grandfather. When he died suddenly, Bob had no one, his school work suffered, he made little effort to play with other boys and he lived in his own world of misery and self-depreciation. When he first met the worker, he was suspicious and unresponsive. She explained her interest in him, enunciating the problems which had brought him to her. She told him of the work which she did with other boys and girls and said that they had found that it helped sometimes just to talk things over. Bob seemed interested and listened attentively. Finally he said, "You mean you're sort of a trouble-shooter?" The worker said that was it, she was a "trouble-shooter". The boy understood and the flood gates opened. Throughout a long and profitable contact, he referred to the worker, and often addressed her, as his "Trouble-shooter".

The worker's early assumption of responsibility for conversation also provides the child with an opportunity to marshal his forces about him and gives him a little time for deciding whether or not he can feel safe with her. Given this time, he is much more able to enter freely into the relationship. He wonders, too, just how much the worker knows about him and what her attitude toward his situation will be. A realistic acceptance of his problem from the beginning sets the relationship in focus and the problem itself is seen in truer perspective than if it were handled less directly. It must be borne in mind, however, that this early reference to the problem is in terms of the child's own recognition of it, and not to any subtler implications which may have already become apparent to the worker. Even when it seems obvious and clear, the worker can offer support and reassurance by articulating it and letting the child know that she understands and is ready to help.

## Directness Helps Child to Face Problem

Veiled references and vague ambiguities are no kindness to a child, and offer neither comfort nor help. If he is failing in school, he knows it. If there is tension in the home and talk of his going away, he is painfully aware of it. He can face the fact when he cannot accept or recognize the causes. In a matter-of-fact acceptance of the problem, the worker makes facing it less difficult and minimizes the opportunity for fantasy.

Because the child not only turns to the parent for the fulfillment of his emotional needs, but is dependent on him for the very necessities of life, his taking into his confidence the worker, another adult, may be a dangerous thing. He may feel that he stands to lose not only love, but actually his place to live as well. He may feel that he is a traitor to a parent to whom he has proved a bad child. He may feel that it is wrong to vest so much confidence, respect and even affection in an individual who succeeds where his parent fails. It is essential to the child's peace of mind that the parent sees the worker, too; that the parent knows he is seeing the worker and that he approves of it in essence. The child is then free to enter into the relationship as he is less likely to feel torn in his loyalties. He also experiences less discomfort as his underlying feelings about himself and his family become apparent, for he cannot live in a world that is black with guilt or one that is bleak with uncertainty.

Wishes which children express, particularly as they relate to plans for their care, may seem unreasonable and even absurd if taken on their face value. The worker, however, needs to recognize them as being of



vital importance to the child and to feel and show a genuine respect for them. The child for whom foster care is being arranged may resist the idea completely, insisting that he can and will live with his grandmother. It is sometimes difficult to remember that the known, no matter how questionable, holds a mighty edge over the unknown, regardless of its ultimate desirability, and that the child makes his evaluations in terms of feelings, while the agency measures by far less personal standards. These the child can neither be expected to understand nor to accept, so that any comparison of his plan with that proposed by the worker is doomed to failure. His wish can be recognized as being of importance because it is his, even if it must be denied because it is not possible to fulfill it, because it is not presently practical or because the worker out of her judgment and experience knows that it does not offer the best plan for the child. Only as this is done, will the child be able to relinquish his plan and take on the one which the worker feels is best. The reasons for rejecting his suggestion must seem sensible to him and need to have some element which will allow him to "save face".

### Over-Permissive Attitude Confusing

Work with children often calls for the use of positive authority which in and of itself is comforting to the child. The worker assumes responsibility and sets limits for the child because she cares about his welfare. He finds confirmation of her interest in her refusal to let him do things that are dangerous and in her insistence on plans for his ultimate good. He is thrown into confusion if her attitude is always permissive or if he is given choices when his judgment and maturity are not sufficient for the task, or if no real choice is available to him.

In all her contacts with children the worker needs to remember the intensity of their feelings, the almost unbearable anticipation with which they await the coming of special days or special events, the depth of their despair at the loss of a much loved pet, the finality of goodbyes, the importance of the trivial. She needs to recognize, too, the difference in the meanings which children attach to words and adult concepts of them. The child who says he hates his mother may well mean that he is hurt and displeased and angry about something which she has done. It may be transitory and the relationship may be basically sound. The child who professes his great love for a relative stranger may be expressing his gratitude for some small attention and declaring his need for an affectional tie which has never been his. It is only as the worker comes to know the language

of children and its meaning for them that she can arrive at an understanding of any child as an individual. Their language is only partially verbal, for there are silences, abrupt changes in conversation, a drop of the head, sudden outbursts of feeling, that speak with equal eloquence and demand equal attention.

### Child Never Neutral to Own Family

Above all else, the worker must recognize the importance and the meaning which a child's own family has for him. His feelings toward it may be strongly positive or strongly negative or anywhere in between, but they are never neutral. Even when the parent-child relationship is essentially good, there will be times when a child's hostility is apparent. This, in varying degrees, can be expected in work with all children, and in general is a healthy sign. Any attempt to prevent its expression inevitably leads to a feeling of guilt and frustration on the part of the child.

Children deserve, even if they do not always receive, the same consideration which is extended to adults. They deserve truthfulness and have a right to be respected as individuals. Promises should not be made if they cannot be kept, or appointments if there is not reasonable expectation that they will be met. When plans must be changed, the child should be given a satisfactory explanation as early as possible. If there are interruptions during an office visit, the worker can say that she is sorry. These evidences of respect and consideration go far in helping the child achieve a reaffirmation of his own worth and a faith in his worker on whom, for a time at least, he must be dependent.

A valuable tool in work with children is a knowledge of the things in which children are currently interested, for customs and hobbies and interests change from generation to generation. The worker must be able to participate freely in the child's world. She must know what movies have a special appeal, what comics are popular, what is acceptable by way of dress and even of behavior. As she becomes familiar with the interests and activities of a particular child, she then considers his total picture of development in terms of what is regarded as "normal" for children of his age and cultural group. If there are deviations, these must be viewed in the light of all the factors which might have affected or modified the child's adjustment. An eleven-year-old may be in the second grade because of intellectual limitations, because of physical handicaps, because of irregular school attendance or because of emotional problems which make it impossible for him to use his capabilities. A severely retarded child may appear much brighter than he actually is because of the stimula-

tion he has received. An aggressive, hostile youngster may be reacting in a logical way to the treatment which he receives from the members of his family. No incident in a child's life can be lifted out of the whole and viewed as a separate entity. All the things which have happened to him, all the events of which he has been a part, weave into an intricate pattern to make the child what he is. Only as these are comprehended in terms of their meaning to him can he himself be understood.

Workers with little or no experience in child welfare are apprehensive about their early contacts with children, yet never did an experience ask so little or offer so much. Except in rare instances of emergency, the worker has at the outset but one primary con-

cern, that of establishing a sound relationship with the child. This takes time, patience and courage, for there is always pressure for action. If the relationship is good, however, the worker can make countless "mistakes" with no harm done. If it is weak, she can do the "right" thing time after time without results. As she comes to understand the meaning of the child's environment, both physical and emotional, as she perceives the differences in the contacts with children and adults, and as she allows herself to be natural, comfortable and uninhibited, she is building toward such a relationship. This relationship sustains her as she tests out theories and concepts. This and this alone can support casework practice with children.

## "FREE ASSOCIATION ON PROBLEMS OF CHILD WELFARE"\*

### Putting the Social Back in Social Casework

**Helen Harris Perlman**

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The School of Social Service Administration  
The University of Chicago  
Chicago, Ill.

There has been a rather troubling trend in social casework in recent years. One hopes that it is symptomatic only of a temporary phase of our development—perhaps one of those excessive "swings" which may be found in the late adolescence of a maturing person and also of a maturing profession. It might be called an "intra-psychic-mindedness,"—a kind of concentration or obsession with problems of emotional or personality malfunctioning and with methods and schemes for casework treatment of these. That this is a proper and vital area of our concern no one would deny, but the trouble has been that another proper and vital area of concern has at least temporarily been neglected or cast aside as unimportant. This is the area of concern with what is maladjusted or sick in the inter-personal, person-to-group, social living of our clients and with the enriched development of understanding and means by which the realities of the person's everyday living may be so modified or changed as to affect, benignly, his internal unhappiness.

(Continued next page 1st column)

\*Taken from a panel session at the League's South Pacific Regional Conference at Long Beach, Cal., May, 1952, in which specialists presented problems in child welfare of great concern to them, followed by discussion from the floor.

### Service to Children in Their Own Homes

**Annie Lee Davis**

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United States Children's Bureau  
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1. We, in the child welfare field, subscribe to the philosophy of the importance of the child's own home; but do our practices carry forward this philosophy?
2. Do we not need to examine the child welfare programs in local communities to determine if we are starting at the right point in relation to children—whether we are not often starting with the end results rather than the beginnings of problems?
3. In practice, do we really support our philosophy of the importance of the child's own home when we concentrate on care of children away from their own homes and look to other fields of social work to provide the services that keep children in their own homes?
4. If the importance of the child's own home is a basic concern in the child welfare field, then in practice we must recognize the responsibility within child welfare to provide the social services that will strengthen and maintain home life for children.
5. The following are some questions about practices in the child welfare field the answers to which

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The symptoms of this troubling trend are manifold and one need name only a few to have the problem recognized: There is some overdependence and clinging to psychiatry and psychiatrists for guidance, sometimes valid, often inappropriate in its negation of casework's own responsibility to identify, diagnose and plan for dealing with the problem. There is, in some quarters, an over-identification with psychiatry, over-identification in the sense that there is some loss of the specific identity of social work; it becomes not an entity in its own right but an extension of another. There is some grandiosity present in our assumption that all that happens to a client, all that is vital and meaningful to him occurs within the casework interview, and while it is true that this unit of experience can be deeply meaningful to a client, it is also true that he lives 24 hours a day, seven days a week with other persons and social situations which act upon him and he upon them. There is a concomitant tendency, with these other symptoms, to hold in minor esteem those forms and means of social casework which are not intimately associated with psychiatric auspices and psychotherapeutic methods.

The causes of this trend are multiple, as causation is likely to be. They lie in the very difficult nature of the problems which caseworkers encounter, so difficult, often, as to make us feel childishly helpless. They lie in our ignorance of the limits of what psychiatry actually knows, limits which the responsible psychiatrist will be the first to delineate, created by the mysteries—as yet unprobed—of how to help people and inherent in the special nature of the psychiatrist's job. They lie in our feelings of inferiority as we, members of a young and often unloved profession, work with a long established and highly respected profession like medicine, and our wish to partake of its security and status by saying "me, too". They lie, too, in the fact that we have failed to identify, to express conceptually and to formulate for communication that accrual of knowledge of social life which has grown out of the daily work of every social caseworker and is the product of our repeated experience. There are certain areas of knowledge which are social casework's own. For example, the special considerations which arise out of the relation of agency setting and function to what can be done in treatment, or the possibilities and limitations inherent in foster home life for a child but we have not put our accumulated experience into generalizations or principles which can be transferred from one social worker to another and used to illuminate one case after the other. For this reason, among others mentioned and left unmen-

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from previous page, 2nd column)

may indicate that we are not carrying forward our philosophy of the importance of the child's own home.

- a. To what extent are we working hard in child welfare to find foster homes for children when the development of homemaker service would keep children in their own homes?
- b. In providing help to parents who show signs of failing in their jobs of parenthood, do we wait until the conditions within the family have become so bad for the child that his removal from the home is necessary? To what extent do we get into these situations in the early stage of the difficulty and thereby increase the chances for improving the home situation?
- c. To what extent are we working closely with the public schools, police officials, physicians and health agencies and others who come in contact with children so that children and families may be referred when the early signs of difficulties appear?
- d. How creative, skillful and courageous are we in interpreting the needs of children in our local communities to responsible citizens and groups so that they can clearly understand the services that are needed and the importance of employing adequate staff if children's needs are to be met?
- e. Problems in this field are highlighted in our work with children in minority groups. For example, all agencies are experiencing difficulty in finding adequate foster homes for Indian and Mexican-American children. In trying to do the best we can with the resources that are available, we are, in many instances, developing makeshift plans of foster care. If the energy consumed in trying to find adequate foster care facilities were diverted to determining what the strengths are in the family situation and how other strengths can be discovered and developed, might we not reduce the number of these children who really need foster care?
6. We must be clear that foster care programs will continue to be needed for many children. However, keeping children in their own homes to the extent that this contributes to the child's well-being, and preserving and strengthening home life for children constitute the base of the child welfare program to which all other services, whether foster care, adoption or whatever, should be related. Therefore, providing social services to children living in their own homes is a basic responsibility within the child welfare program.

# CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE MEETINGS

## *A Few High Spots of Some Important Discussions*

### **"Within the Family"**

THE Annual Meeting of the Child Welfare League membership was held as part of our 1952 National Conference program on May 28. Marshall Field, President, presided.

In addition to a discussion of the financial statement led by Mrs. Herbert F. Fisher, Treasurer, reports of the year's activities and an outline of some next steps, Spencer H. Crookes, Executive Director, asked for discussion of problems of immediate concern to child welfare agencies and what our members consider our role in helping them to work on these problems. The group identified the following as the more serious and pressing needs demanding League attention:

1. The need for defining essential requirements for professional education and training in the field of child welfare.
2. The need for maintaining consistent relationship with schools of social work in connection with curricula in child welfare.
3. The need for more practical research and also the need for more coordination and better use of research material already available.
4. The need for continuing and, if possible, expanding the public information programs initiated by the League in the series of eight radio programs on the National Broadcasting Company network this year.
5. The need for a plan that would be effective in developing training programs and stimulating recruitment to meet the increasing shortage in professional personnel.
6. The need for "more frequent" opportunities for direct consultation with the field staff.
7. The need for developing plans whereby the many values already existing in the Regional Conferences could be increased through more reciprocal activity in the regions.

### **Meeting of the Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors of the Child Welfare League met on June 11th and 12th, Mr. Field presiding.

The election of new Board Members was announced. They are Albert Keidel, Jr., Baltimore, Md.; Mrs. E. T. Meredith, Jr., Des Moines, Iowa; Harlan T. Pierpont, Worcester, Mass.; and Dr. Tillman M. Sogge, St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn.

Reports made by officers, the Executive Director and members of the staff all stressed the growing range of League activities.

Mr. Crookes' report on the League's program of service reflected the discussion of the "Within the Family" meeting reported above. There has been a marked acceleration of service requests from member agencies and from organizations and individuals outside of our membership. These have resulted largely from:

Local financial pressures that often threaten standards of individual child welfare agencies through budget cutting and also through hasty community planning;

Critical need for more field services to communities in these dilemmas in order to prevent dilution of standards;

Critical need for an annual reporting system to furnish essential data to affiliates.

It was recognized by the Board that certain priorities must be established in trying to meet these problems in relation to our current resources of funds and staff. Therefore, a motion was made and unanimously carried which empowered the President to appoint a special committee to work with the staff in making a study "in terms of realistic limits which must be imposed to enable the League to be effective in helping local agencies". This, it seems to us, is a step of great importance. The activity of this new committee will be duly reported in these columns.

### **New League Member**

Children's Day Care Association, Inc.  
515 West Jefferson Street  
Fort Wayne 2, Indiana  
Mrs. Josephine Jahoda, Acting Executive Director

### **New League Provisional**

Free Synagogue Child Adoption Committee  
48 West 68th Street  
New York 23, N. Y.  
Mrs. Sydney Brown, Executive Director

### **CONFERENCE**

The Midwest Regional Conference will be held September 25, 26, 27, 1952, in Des Moines, Iowa. Headquarters will be the Hotel Savery. Mrs. Lois Sentman, State University of Iowa School of Social Work, is chairman.

# 1951 Financial Statement of Child Welfare League of America, Inc.

## STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURES

FOR YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1951

### INCOME

Membership Dues.....	\$86,433.99
Contributions.....	28,641.90
Publications.....	14,285.45
Advisory Service.....	1,851.50
Professional Fees and Travel Refund.....	13,393.21
Miscellaneous.....	965.42
LEAGUE OPERATIONS, INCOME.....	<u>\$145,571.47</u>
Surveys.....	19,332.84
Grants for Special Projects.....	29,187.46
ALL OPERATIONS, INCOME.....	<u>\$194,091.77</u>

### EXPENDITURES

Salaries.....	\$78,201.98
Travel and Maintenance.....	12,967.42
Regional Conference Expenses.....	4,688.67
Fund Raising.....	925.33
Public Education.....	4,053.16
Printing of Publications.....	14,797.07
Service Fees and Dues.....	1,285.00
Rent.....	9,600.00
Office Administration.....	10,760.76
Printing and Multigraphing.....	3,037.55
Income and Medical Plans.....	472.12
Provision for Employees' Retirement.....	4,593.47
LEAGUE OPERATIONS, EXPENDITURES.....	<u>\$145,382.53</u>
Surveys.....	19,393.34
Grants for Special Projects.....	29,187.46
ALL OPERATIONS, EXPENDITURES.....	<u>\$193,963.33</u>
EXCESS BALANCE.....	<u>\$128.44</u>

## Monsignor M. F. McEvoy

The League has lost a good friend and staunch supporter with the death on May 9 of the Right Reverend Monsignor M. F. McEvoy, Director of the Catholic Social Welfare Bureau in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A member of the League's Board of Directors from 1929 to 1935, Msgr. McEvoy had for 32 years headed the Bureau which he founded as a clearing house and referral service for Catholic social agencies in Milwaukee. A lifelong champion of higher standards of child care and professional social work training, Msgr. McEvoy was a leader in the effort to enact into law the children's code passed by the Wisconsin legislature in 1929. He served as president of the Wisconsin Welfare Council, and was on the executive committee of the National Conference of Catholic Charities. Head of the Milwaukee Community Welfare Council's Social Planning Committee, he was a charter member and president of the local chapter of the American Association of Social Workers.

In paying tribute to Msgr. McEvoy's keen understanding of social welfare problems and the warmth of spirit with which he approached them, we speak not only for ourselves but for the entire child welfare field.

## MARY E. BORETZ AWARD FOR 1953

THE Mary E. Boretz Award Committee announces with regret that no award could be made this year.

The Award Committee is convinced that there is much of current interest in agency programs and projects in schools of social work in these times of development and change about which stimulating and meritorious papers could be written. In the hope of evoking a more widespread response and submission of more manuscripts next year, the Committee is announcing at this time that the deadline for receipt of entries for the third annual Mary E. Boretz Award, will be February 1, 1953. The Committee stressed that graduate students will be welcome to submit manuscripts in connection with their field assignments.

The Mary E. Boretz Award was created by friends of Miss Boretz as a tribute to her great leadership in child welfare and is administered by the Child Welfare League of America. Two grants of \$250 and \$150 respectively are to be awarded annually for manuscripts which in the judgment of the Award Committee make the most significant contribution to the field of child welfare. The decision of this committee will be final. While book rights are retained by the writer, the League will publish selected manuscripts either in CHILD WELFARE or as pamphlets.

Requirements for the submission of manuscripts are as follows:

1. Manuscripts must deal with subject matter in the field of child welfare, and should be based on practical, current experience in the writer's own sphere of activity.
2. The material presented should stimulate new thinking in the field of child welfare.
3. Students, as well as board members and professional workers, are invited to submit material. A statement of professional qualifications, in the case of workers; of agency affiliation and office held, in the case of board members; or of affiliation with a school of social work, in the case of students, should accompany the manuscript.
4. Manuscripts may be from 4000 to 6000 words in length, and should be presented in five copies to facilitate reading by the judges.
5. Manuscripts must reach the League office by February 1, 1953.

Inquiries should be addressed to the Information and Publications Department of the Child Welfare League, 24 West 40th Street, New York 18, N. Y.



# BOARD RELATIONSHIPS IN A STATEWIDE AGENCY

**Horace Daniels\***

Chairman, Vancouver Area Branch Board  
Washington Children's Home Society  
Seattle, Wash.

*How one statewide agency in which relationships of state and branch boards had grown up informally reorganized and defined the responsibilities of its boards is related by Mr. Daniels. The opinion of the local boards was consulted from the start, and the whole approach to the problem illustrates constructive community planning.*

**A**N agency which operates through offices in widely separated cities is confronted with problems of organization and relative authority of the parts and the whole. These problems are likely to become more acute if the structure of the agency is changing. The Washington Children's Home Society has been going through such a developmental experience. It has not been spectacular, but a description of the change and how we met the resulting problem may be of interest to others.

Until 1942 the Society operated from two offices. The Seattle office was the state headquarters and served the western counties of the state; the Spokane office served the eastern ones. As population, financial support, and agency services to children have increased, other offices were established: in Yakima, 1942; Vancouver, 1944; Walla Walla, 1947; Tacoma, 1948. The Tacoma office was started as a part-time service from Seattle, 30 miles away, and gradually became full-time three years later.

There was a local advisory board in each community in which there was an office, but the State Board of 36 members was the legally responsible body. This Board meets in Seattle, and has functioned with both state-wide and local responsibility. Usually about half the members of the State Board are residents of Seattle; the other members are drawn from other communities throughout the state. Members of the State Board have been active in the organization of the Branch Boards in communities in which offices have been established, and serve on the Branch Boards as well as on the State Board.

Relationships between the boards in Seattle and Spokane had been worked out informally over a period of nearly 50 years, and were generally well understood. The establishment of offices in Yakima and Vancouver created no serious problems. Both were single-caseworker offices with small boards of eight to 12 persons, established during the war years. With the establishment of branches in Walla Walla and Tacoma, questions of the relationship between

the State Board and Branch Boards began to appear. These were especially pertinent in Walla Walla, where the opening and operation of a small children's institution was involved, as well as the operation of a foster home program. These questions were chiefly related to the degree of local autonomy in matters of finance, administration and policy formation. The questions came chiefly, but by no means exclusively, from the new boards, as the establishment of new offices to serve parts of the areas formerly served by the older branches created some financial and relationship problems for the older boards as well.

The problem was brought to a focus when Spencer Crookes, Executive Director of the Child Welfare League of America, made a study of the operation of the new institution for adolescent boys at Walla Walla. He reported that there seemed to be no clear definition of the responsibilities of the Branch and State Boards.

## Relationships A Matter of Custom

The Society recognized that this was true. Inter-board relationships were largely a matter of custom, and custom in some cases had been based on expediency as well as principle. What had been expedient might be so no longer. Even principles are modified by time. So, rather than to attempt to answer questions piecemeal, the State Board decided that a comprehensive re-examination of the whole problem of inter-board relationships should be undertaken. The Board was under no illusion as to its own omniscience. From the start it was recognized that the information, experience, and wisdom of all board members in the state were required if we were to formulate and set down the best possible policies.

In May, 1951, a questionnaire containing 37 basic questions was sent to all members of the State and Branch Boards. The questions included such problems as relative responsibility and authority for the emergency use of endowment funds, designation of emergency and endowment funds for the use of a particular branch; methods of auditing and bill-paying; responsibility for direct fund raising; deter-

\* Mr. Daniels is Past President and a Board Member of the Washington Children's Home Society.

mination of service policies and personnel policies; the functions of state-wide supervision; and all other relationships of the State and Branch Boards.

### Local Opinions Assiduously Sought

The boards were asked to arrange for a thorough discussion of the questions, and to appoint representatives to a state-wide committee which would prepare a report as to what the relationships should be. All of the Branch Boards did this. Most of them appointed committees of their own to consider the questions and to prepare a preliminary report; this was then fully discussed at one or two meetings of each board, and a report was prepared by each board. Throughout this process the state director and other staff members freely answered any questions as to what they thought the effect of various alternatives might be, but did not volunteer suggestions.

The reports of the Branch Boards were compiled, and copies of this summary compilation were then mailed to the board members, so that they could all see in what ways they had agreed or disagreed with other boards, and how the other boards had suggested meeting the problems. The summaries thus furnished the basis for further discussion within the Branch Boards, and there were some modifications of original views as a result.

In December, 1951, the state-wide committee met. The meeting was attended by a representative of each branch and one from the State Board, with the President serving as chairman. The conclusions of the Branch Boards had been surprisingly uniform, and their viewpoints had come even closer together after they had considered the suggestions of other boards and the reasons for them. The meeting of the state-wide committee served to reconcile without any difficulty the remaining points of difference.

A few of the conclusions reached may have more than local interest, and are set forth here:

1. The State Board and staff should be responsible for establishing and maintaining uniform service standards, so that an applicant for any service would receive the same consideration in any part of the state. This was considered of the utmost importance by all boards.
2. To this end, the state organization would also establish personnel standards, salary classifications, personnel practices, etc.
3. There seemed to be no public relations value in local accounting and bill-paying; this could be done more efficiently and economically if it were centralized. Payments should be made by checks drawn on a local bank, however, if the branch wished this.
4. The state organization should continue to have primary responsibility for raising funds by direct solicitation in areas where there are no Community Chests.
5. The state organization should also continue to prepare general publicity and informational material and make suggestions for local use of such materials.
6. Otherwise, the Branch Boards should have administrative control of their operations. This represented a rather complete change, as the Branch Boards previously had been considered as only advisory to the State Board, although in practice their recommendations had been accepted rather routinely.

7. The State Board should not try to operate both in relationship to statewide problems and the local problems of the Seattle area, but should stimulate the organization of another Branch Board to handle the local problems.

### Adopted as Official Policy

A summary of the conclusions reached was prepared and mailed to all State and Branch Board members, with a request for any further comments. Apparently everyone was satisfied with the work of the Committee. There were no objections to the report, which was adopted by the State Board as the official policy of the agency in February, 1952. This was between nine and ten months after the first questionnaire had been mailed.

This procedure does not seem to be in any way unusual, but illustrates what I believe to be three rules which should be observed when questions of fundamental agency policy or organization are to be reviewed:

- (1) Everyone concerned should have sufficient time to become familiar with the problems and their implications, and the probable effects of proposed changes;
- (2) Everyone should have ample opportunity to express his opinion and to know that it has been given full consideration;
- (3) "Everyone" should include not only those who have direct legal responsibility for policy determination, but also should democratically include all those who have an interest in, or are affected by, the policies to be considered for change.

The last is the most important. A state-wide agency requires clear-cut and uniform operating policies, but these can best be arrived at by a process of participation at all levels and all across the board.

### SPEAKERS' KIT FOR HOMEFINDING CAMPAIGN

THE Jewish Social Service Bureau of Detroit has just completed a six months' homefinding project in which a staff worked together and which drew in a large number of volunteer workers. While "final" results are not yet available, the agency considers the experience was highly valuable from more than one point of view. In addition to arousing interest in the need for more foster homes, the project provided some new and effective means of interpreting the agency program. One important by-product is that "more individuals in the community have become aware of the agency for the first time. JSSB is no longer a scramble of letters, it has positive meaning".

Among other resources used in the recruitment project, a speakers' kit was developed which proved useful to all concerned. This contains seven pieces of material, including an excellent handbook for foster parents and a booklet with a series of 23 questions and answers about the details of foster home placement, and other pertinent information simply and clearly put. These speakers' kits are available for \$1.00 by direct order to the Jewish Social Service Bureau, 5737 Second Ave., Detroit 2, Mich.

(Continued from page 9)

tioned here, we tend to lean heavily on a collaborating profession, psychiatry, which has consistently translated its experience into concepts. This, incidentally, is what Professor Tyler identifies as a distinguishing mark of a profession—"the basing of its technics of operation upon principles rather than rule-of-thumb procedures or simple routine skills".\*

This idea, that social casework suffers from a failure to express its social knowledge conceptually, is not mine. It is propounded by Dr. Otto Pollak in his newly published book, *Social Science and Psychotherapy for Children*†, and I commend this book to social caseworkers because, it seems to me, it may serve to restore some balance in us between our respect for and valid use of psychiatric knowledge and our respect for and valid use of social knowledge. The theme of this book, as its title suggests, is that social science has much to offer in our psychotherapeutic efforts with children. The persons who were responsible for and participated in the inquiry and discussions which led to the writing of this book are members of a psychoanalytically oriented child guidance clinic staff. Their concern was to find (perhaps "re-discover" is the better word) "specific funds of knowledge in the social sciences which might be put to use in child guidance". Out of his two years' experience in this clinic Dr. Pollak produces a number of useful concepts. One of them is that there are extra-familial influences in pathogenesis; another is that interpersonal relationships in the family circle will be affected by change in one family member; a third is that there may be persons in a child's life as potent (or more so) as his biological parents; and there are a number of others. What experienced social caseworkers are likely to say as they read these is that they have known these things all along, and that is undoubtedly true. Yet it is also true that because we social caseworkers have not set down these "knowns", their *significance* and their implications for treatment have not consistently carried over into our operations. Our exploration of the child's social relationships and social activities and our engaging in treatment of those persons who vitally affect the child (not always or only the mother), or our efforts to ameliorate or to utilize constructively the child's vital social environment,—these are therapeutic means which have grown remote and neglected as increasingly we have equated treatment of the child with certain controlled communications between him and his caseworker.

\* "Distinctive Attributes of Education for the Professions", by Ralph W. Tyler, *Social Work Journal*, April, 1952.

† Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1952.

To Dr. Pollak's social science concepts, social caseworkers can if they will add many more which may serve to make social casework's contribution to the knowledge we seek in order to help troubled people. I suggest only one, as an example. It is this: The social problem of today creates the intra-psychic problem of tomorrow. There is no problem of emotional maladjustment in children or adults as we find them today which was not, yesterday, a problem the child encountered outside of himself—in the impact upon him of his mother or father or siblings, or playmates or teachers, or economic or health or housing conditions—in short, his intra-psychic problems have come about because on one day or over a series of days his social situation was more than he could deal with. This is a tremendously important concept for the social caseworker. Indeed it is the foundation idea on which social work is based, that the everyday life condition of the individual should be or must be made to be such as to ameliorate or, better still, prevent human misery.

Every day in his work the child welfare caseworker, like caseworkers in other kinds of social agencies, encounters unhappy, maladjusted children and grown-ups. They are not only the product of their past. They are being acted upon and are reacting to their immediate social situations. We need to know what these are, and what objective and subjective significance they hold for our clients, and what we must do to insure their being situations and experiences that are benign rather than devastating, supportive rather than undermining of the individual's strengths. This means that along with our psychological understanding and use of that knowledge in helping our clients we need to understand the social elements which mold the individual in his daily life and to develop and use those elements, along with social resources and social services to meet his life needs. In brief, this means greater effort on our part to put the "social" back into social casework because it is basic to meeting the client's needs adequately. And, incidentally, because it will help to clarify and more firmly establish our professional identity.

### Correction

The cost of the reprint, "A Day Care Program to Meet Community Needs", by Ethel Verry, Executive Secretary, Chicago Child Care Society, which appeared in the April, 1952, issue of *CHILD WELFARE*, was erroneously listed in last month's issue as \$.15. The correct price is \$.20.



## THE 1953 CASE RECORD EXHIBIT

**P**LANNING for the 1953 Case Record Exhibit sponsored by the Child Welfare League of America got under way May 28 at the National Conference of Social Work in Chicago, where the twelfth annual exhibit was on display. The records are selected by twelve regional committees to show the best in current child welfare practice.

Nine regional committees were represented at the meeting of the 1953 National Planning Committee called by Miss Ruth Heistand, the new National Chairman. Mrs. Henrietta L. Gordon of the League staff, who initiated the exhibit project, met with the Committee. She encouraged constant re-examination of the exhibit's purposes, and emphasized that the chief test of the exhibit's value must be found in its use for staff development. Mrs. Gordon warned of the danger of "dividing our house among different schools of thought"; it is her conviction that basic principles of sound casework practice can and must be found to which all can subscribe.

The Committee agreed to attempt this year to expand the general criteria into a more detailed outline guide, to help readers evaluate more sharply both the content and the process of the casework shown in the records submitted. The Committee may also attempt to develop additional outline guides for each of the child welfare services (adoption, day care, homemaker service, etc.), so that the general criteria may be applied more specifically to the varying content and skills of the different services. It is hoped that some regional committees may this year volunteer to develop subcommittees to work on parts of this proposed expansion of the criteria.

The Committee plans an agency "self-study" questionnaire this year to appraise the value of the exhibit project to the member agencies, and to invite their comments and criticisms. Agency executives will be asked to work with their staffs on replies to the questionnaire. Miss Elizabeth Meek, chairman of Region IV, has accepted the chairmanship of a subcommittee to draft the questionnaire and study the findings.

Miss Flora Miller, National Chairman of the 1952 Case Record Exhibit, reported that there are 103 records in the exhibit, distributed as follows:

- Adoption, 15
- Day care, 1
- Foster home care, 30
- Foster home studies (adoptive and boarding), 15
- Institutional care, 8
- Services in own home, 10
- Protective, 7
- Unmarried parent, 17.

It was regretted that this year's exhibit has no record showing homemaker service, and only one on day care, but felt there is considerable variety in the activity and focus of the record material. Some records present one or two interviews; others show sustained service for more than a year. Some emphasize the worker's service to the child only, or to the parent, or to the foster parent; others show the skillful balancing of service. The intake study process is highlighted in a number of records, the preparation of the child and parents and foster parents for placement is shown in others, and a fairly large number reflect work with the adolescent. Direct help to parent and child in problems of parent-child relationship is shown in several records.

Miss Miller released statistics on agency participation in the 1952 exhibit, revealing that 137 of the 234 League agencies took some part. 98 agencies submitted 239 records to the regional committees for consideration. 71 agencies and 33 states are represented in the 103 records finally chosen for the exhibit.

When it was originally set up, the Case Record Exhibit project was carefully planned to be a "grass roots" type of activity, participated in by as many agencies and by as many workers as possible. The National Planning Committee, made up of the regional chairmen, the national chairman, and Mrs. Gordon as adviser, coordinates the work of the regions and sets up the broad goals and the practical details of the project. All members of the regional committees and the National Committee have been asked to serve for two years.

The regional committees have responsibility for final selection of records for the annual exhibit. The National Committee selects the best records from each annual exhibit for the permanent library. The permanent library is loaned from the League office to agencies and schools of social work for teaching purposes. Some have been mimeographed for sale. 18 records were selected from the 1951 exhibit for the permanent library; some 12 records have been chosen so far from the 1952 exhibit, but the selection is not yet complete.

### The 1953 Case Record Exhibit Committee

#### National Chairman:

Miss Ruth M. Heistand, Executive Director  
Children's Bureau of Dayton  
225 North Jefferson Street  
Dayton 2, Ohio

#### Regional Chairman:

##### Area I. Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi

Miss Verna Collins  
Child Service Association  
44-11th Street N.E.  
Atlanta, Georgia

**Area II. Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia**

Miss Ann F. Stone, District Secretary  
Children's Home Society of Virginia  
1411 N. Garfield Street  
Arlington, Virginia

**Area III. Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut**

Miss Ann C. Rapoport  
The Children's Center  
1400 Whitney Avenue  
New Haven, Connecticut

**Area IV. Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, Michigan**

Miss Elizabeth A. Meek  
Illinois Children's Home and Aid Society  
1122 N. Dearborn Street  
Chicago, Illinois

**Area V. Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico**

Miss Letha White  
Kansas Children's Service League  
2053 Kansas Avenue  
Topeka, Kansas

**Area VI. Greater New York, Westchester County, New Jersey**

Miss Erica Juliusberger  
Jewish Child Care Association of New York  
29-28 41st Avenue  
Long Island City, N. Y.

**Area VII. New York State—Albany, Syracuse, Buffalo, Elmira, Niagara Falls, Rochester, Utica, Binghamton**

Miss Justine Bland  
Family and Children's Society  
826 Chilton Street  
Niagara Falls, New York

**Area VIII. Ohio, Kentucky**

Miss Elizabeth Cosby  
Division of Child Welfare  
Department of Economic Security  
Frankfort, Kentucky

**Area IX. Delaware, Pennsylvania**

Mrs. Selma G. Stern  
Children's Aid Society of Pennsylvania  
311 South Juniper Street  
Philadelphia 7, Pa.

**Area X. North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee**

Mrs. Helen B. Carpenter  
State Department of Public Welfare  
Columbia, South Carolina

**Area XI. California, Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, Idaho**

Mrs. Irene Piercey  
Boys and Girls Aid Society of Oregon  
919 Taylor Street Building  
Portland 5, Oregon

**Area XII. Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin**

Miss Mary L. Schuster  
Division of Child Welfare and Youth Service  
State Department of Public Welfare  
Madison, Wisconsin

## LEAGUE DAY CARE PUBLICATIONS

### Day Care Packet No. 3

"Administrative Aids". \$3 plus postage.

This packet includes pamphlets and mimeographed materials on board-staff relations, plant and equipment, record forms, finance and budgeting, fees, personnel practices, and public relations. It is planned for persons concerned with the operation of group day care programs.

### Day Care Packet No. 4

"Educational Content of Group Programs". \$2.60 plus postage.

This packet includes pamphlets related to the educational content of a day care program, including pre-school and school age groups and parent participation.

These packets are planned to supplement each other as well as earlier packets and to avoid duplication. The League's "Guide for the Development of Day Care Programs", included in Packets No. 1 and No. 2, is not included. It may be ordered separately for \$.75.

### Loan Packets

Packet B—Plant and equipment

Packet C—Personnel

Packet D—Nursery School Curriculum: Clay, Music, Blocks, etc.

These packets contain more materials on these subjects than could be included in Packets No. 3 and No. 4. Loan packets may be kept six weeks, and should then be returned to the League office. Borrowers will be billed for postage to cover the cost of mailing, and are expected to return the packet prepaid.

### Recommendations on Record Forms for Day Care Agencies

This 15-page instruction guide for the gathering and recording of needed information for the selection and continued day care of pre-school children was developed by a committee composed of representatives of the membership of the New York Association of Day Nurseries and other agencies in New York City concerned with this field, including the Child Welfare League of America. The guide and individual forms have been published by the League, and are available from the League office. The forms presented and discussed in the guide include the application record, the family record and the office file care. The guide costs \$.50; copies of Form DC 4, Application Record, are available at \$1.25 per 100; Form DC 5, Day Care Family Record, at \$3.45 per 100; and Form DC 6, Day Care Office Record, at \$2.60 per 100.

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

### Use of Statistics in Testing Practice\*

MANY social agencies, while recognizing the importance of scientific research in testing the validity of their practices in terms of the therapeutic results, may be discouraged from initiating a research program because of the expense entailed. This article is an attempt to show how a small beginning can be made in evaluating the operation of some of the factors and methods forming a part of an agency's casework program.

This particular agency to which this article refers has for the past six or seven years been focusing in its Child Welfare Division upon certain areas, believing that improvement there would effect improved services as a whole. Although plagued, as are most other child-placing agencies, with a shortage of foster homes, rapid turn-over of staff and the lack of trained caseworkers, the agency has been able to persist in the following emphases with the staff: (1) increased understanding and use of the intake study in recognizing and selecting for acceptance those cases in which placement can presumably serve to meet the underlying problem; (2) increased understanding of the effects of separation on the child, to be reflected not only in sounder thinking in the intake study but in a reduction of the number of replacements of children in care; (3) increased understanding of the importance of the child-parent relationship, again as influencing better screening of applications in the intake process, but also as promoting more effective work with the parents of our foster children and a reduction of the child's period of time in care. And, finally, all of these as making for improvement in the use of existing facilities, staff time, available foster homes, etc.

Accordingly, staff training has, from the supervisory level on, been employed to bring about increased awareness and knowledge in these areas. Also, a reorganization of functions and of staff has allocated a greater proportion of supervisory time to the intake process. Acknowledging that in the long view there are really no short-cuts in child-placing, that all the steps in the process are inter-related and one cannot be neglected at the expense of another without an effect upon the whole, still, because of this very inter-relationship, the emphases above described have seemed a sensible use of facilities which of necessity are limited. Enough time has now elapsed so that the results should, and do seem to,

\* The tables mentioned in this report can be obtained at the League office.

lend themselves to some measurement and evaluation.

By means of punch cards, which carry data taken from the workers' daily report of changes, figures have annually been compiled for the agency's annual report. These figures, going back to cover a ten-year period, are the basis for the data (taken from tabulations) which follow, and which it was expected would have some bearing on answers to the following:

1. Have the number of replacements been reduced?
2. Has the period of care been shortened?

There was no difficulty in developing statistical means to show the trend of replacements. Figures were available showing the number of homes occupied during each current year by each of the children presently under care. Tables were used to show the number of replacements in terms of percentages of children; i.e. in 1941 68.5% of the children in care had been in but one foster home *during that year*; 24.6% had been in two homes during that year, 5.6% in three homes, while 1.3% had occupied four different homes. From the figures, one sees a steady increase in the number of children in the "one home" category and a corresponding decrease in the "two", "three" and "four or more" groups. In 1950 these trends were even more graphically shown with an increase of 15.6% in 1950 in the "one home" group as compared with the percentage of children in that group in 1941. While there is thus graphic evidence that the number of replacements of children has been steadily tending toward reduction during this ten year period, one cannot, of course, conclude that the casework services surrounding placement and replacement of children have been correspondingly improved. Other figures will seem to show that the period in care has been reduced and this would in itself leave less time within which replacements *could* take place! Also, the mere fact of "no replacement" does not guarantee its validity,—maybe the child should have been moved. Nevertheless the answer to our question has been secured,—we know that the number of replacements has steadily and significantly been reduced. For an evaluation of the soundness of the process by which this reduction has been effected we must look elsewhere.

Again out of available figures, other dates were obtained. They give the length of time under care in the foster home population for each current year. It is shown, for example, that in 1941 64.9% of the children had been in care five years or less, 26.2% for six to ten years, 8.9% for eleven to fifteen years and none for sixteen to twenty years. Comparison of



these percentages from year to year reveals a gradual but appreciable increase in the percentage of children in the group under care for the shortest period of time, i.e., an increase from 64.9% in 1941 to 70.3% in 1950.

It is necessary, of course, to look for other factors which might have had an effect on length of the period in care. A stepped-up adoption program, begun in 1948, would have limited the time in care but only for the fifteen to twenty children annually placed thereafter in adoption homes. It would seem reasonable to believe that the trend toward a shortened period of time in care, together with the other trends is a reflection of some success in the direction of our staff training.

Data giving the age groups of children in foster homes for each of the years 1941 to 1951 has bearing on this question of length of time in care. These indicate an appreciable and fairly consistent trend toward an increasing percentage of children being concentrated in the lower age groups and therefore a reduction in upper ages. For example, the percentage of children under two years of age was 5.5% in 1941; it increases to its maximum 13.4% in 1947 and in 1950 is lowered to 12.8%. This proportionate increase in the younger ages is shown in 1941 as 18.7% under five years, a high point of 41.0% in 1946 and 32.8% in 1950. This increase on the part of the "five year" group shows as a gain in 1950 of 14.1% over the same age group in 1941, and a proportionate loss in the ten-year and older group in 1950 as compared with 1941.

If no other factors intervened, the percentage increase in the younger age group would offer evidence of the effect of the shortened period of time in care; i. e., because children are not remaining as long in care, the number of older children is growing less and therefore the number of young children is growing proportionately greater. What, though, about the influence of the birth rate? The figures for Westchester County (exclusive of Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle and Yonkers) for this ten year period show

arising rate. Comparison with the agency figures shows, however, a lack of relationship between the two. For instance, the percentage of children in the "Under five year group" was nearly doubled in 1950—i. e., 32.8% as against 18.7% in 1941—whereas the gain in birth rate was only from 14.5 in 1941 to 17.7 in 1950. Furthermore, the high points in the two trends do not correspond. The high point in increased proportion of younger children in care was reached in 1946 while the high point in the birth rate came after that, in 1947.

It becomes necessary to examine the age of children at admission as affecting this change in the age of the population. Table VIII gives this and while it too shows an upward trend in the lower age groups, this trend as well as the one for the birth rate shows lack of correspondence with the trend of increase in the younger age groups of children in care. The high points do not correspond—the high point in the "Age at Admission" table IX is in 1948 (54.0% under five years) while the year 1946 is the high point (41.0% under five years) for the Table V "Age of Foster Home Children."

As already mentioned, there is conclusive evidence that the period of time in care has been considerably shortened. These data on ages are interesting in showing some of the effect of this shortened time in care in that there is an increased proportion of children in the infant to two year group and not only that but, a great increase in actual numbers. In 1941, for instance there were 48 children in care under two years of age; this number more than doubled in 1946, (105 children) and nearly trebled in 1950 (136 children). Provided with these figures, the administration was in a position to sponsor changes in the casework program whereby a larger number of infants could achieve adoption and also was able to secure for the agency greatly needed enlargement of its medical and nursing services for infants.

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